

Prune-stuffed roast loin of pork (Arrosto di Maiale alle Prugne)



Courtesy of Lidia Bastianich from “Lidia’s Mastering the Art of Italian Cuisine” (Knopf)

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- * 8 ounces dried pitted prunes
- * 1/2 cup bourbon
- * 3-pound boneless center pork loin roast, trimmed
- * 10 fresh sage leaves
- * Kosher salt
- * Freshly ground black pepper
- * 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- * 1/2 cup finely diced carrot
- * 1/2 cup finely diced celery
- * 1/2 cup roughly chopped onion
- * 4 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
- * 2 1/2 cups chicken stock



In a small bowl, soak the prunes in bourbon 1 hour. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Drain the prunes, and set four of them aside along with the soaking liquid.

To stuff the roast: Use a sharp knife to cut a 1-inch pocket along the entire length of the eye, around the top half the roast, like forming a tunnel. Cut from both sides of the roast until you cut through.

Stuff three quarters of the soaked prunes into the slit in the roast, and tie the roast securely with kitchen twine at 2-inch intervals. Thread the sage leaves underneath the ties on either side of the roast. Season the roast generously with salt and pepper, and rub it with the olive oil.

Put the roast in a large roasting pan, and roast 15 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 400 degrees. Tilt the roasting pan, and spoon off excess fat. Scatter the carrot, celery, onion, and garlic around the roast. Roast an additional 15 minutes. Add the reserved prunes and soaking liquid, and roast 10 minutes. Pour the stock into the pan, and continue cooking, basting the roast occasionally with the pan juices, until a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the roast registers 145 degrees, about 30 minutes more.

Remove the roast to a platter. Pass the contents of the pan through a food mill fitted with the fine disk into a small bowl. (Alternatively, strain the liquid through a sieve, pressing on the vegetables to extract as much liquid as possible and to force some of the vegetables through the sieve.) Skim all fat from the surface of the sauce. The sauce should be thick enough to coat a spoon lightly. If not, transfer it to a small saucepan and reduce a bit more. Season the sauce with salt and pepper, if needed. Cut the meat into 1/4-inch slices, and serve it with the sauce.

Spruce up your home for the holidays with these crafty ideas

Here’s a way to lose the shirt off your back for a good cause!

Upcycle plaid or flannel shirts the kids or Dad have outgrown into menswear-inspired ornaments to add a rustic, outdoorsy touch to your tree. Also a good way to memorialize that favorite shirt Grandpa used to wear:

Materials needed:

- * old shirts
- * foam balls
- * straight pins
- * floral wire
- * scissors

Steps:

- * Find vintage shirts patterns that work with your holiday theme.
- * Cut all the seams off the shirt, including the collar, cuffs and yolk. Then, take off the buttons. This will ensure you get as much fabric as you can.
- * Use different-sized foam balls and straight pins.
- * Lay out a piece of the fabric. Roll one of the balls with the piece of fabric to find out how big the strips need to be to cover the foam. Cut the fabric this length so you have a big strip.
- * Fold the strip up lengthwise four times and cut different widths.
- * Take one end of the fabric and wrap it around the ball and pin it. Continue this process until the entire ball is covered. A second set of hands is helpful.
- * Use floral wire to adhere the ball to garland, a wreath or a tree.



More ornamental ideas

Try a fresh twist: Fresh fruit has long been used to decorate Christmas trees; the bright pop of color and fresh scent is hard to beat. This year, instead of studding the orange with cloves, opt for a more fashion-forward approach and use tacks. To attach the ribbon for hanging, cut two shallow slits around the orange’s navel then slide through a loop of leopard-print ribbon.



Useful for more than just treats for Santa: Metal cookie cutters are too pretty to keep hidden away in a drawer, especially if they’re family-hand-me-downs. After you’ve finished your holiday baking, back the ornaments with colorful paper and put your favorites on display.

Here’s a bright idea: Don’t toss old light bulbs – instead, give them new life as glittering tree ornaments. A few coats of metallic spray paint and a ribbon for hanging are all you need. Smaller light bulbs work best grouped together in odd numbers, while larger lightbulbs are best as single ornaments.

Get in the game: Get the kiddos crafting to make a few of these playful ornaments that are a snap to make using Scrabble letters glued onto a strip of colorful ribbon. Use the letters to spell out holiday sayings or family members’ names. **Courtesy of HGTV.com**